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ABSTRACT

Between May 1969 and October 1973, the University of California, Davis, was involved in a series of research and service projects designed to better the condition of single-male farmworkers in Stockton and Sacramento. These communities, known locally as skid row, were destroyed as a result of urban renewal. The projects were separated into 2 phases: 1) the development of service and research methods in the Sacramento Skid Row community, and 2) the application of these methods to the Stockton Skid Row community. In Phase I, university efforts focused on employment and training opportunities, community development, service projects, and in-culture research. Project developments during Phase II were: in-culture research, community development, services needed for survival, and casual labor market assessment. The in-culture research method operates on the philosophy that the persons who participate in a culture or subculture are a valuable information source on their needs and lifestyles. A research team from within the group collected data by a questionnaire composed of questions from the group and interviews. This monograph emphasizes the process in which the single-men projects were developed, briefly describing the projects and discussing research results and implications of the process for future researchers. Findings indicate that members of the single-male subculture can be organized into self-help groups and that the in-culture research approach works. (NQ)

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THE PLIGHT OF UNEMPLOYED SINGLE FARM WORKERS

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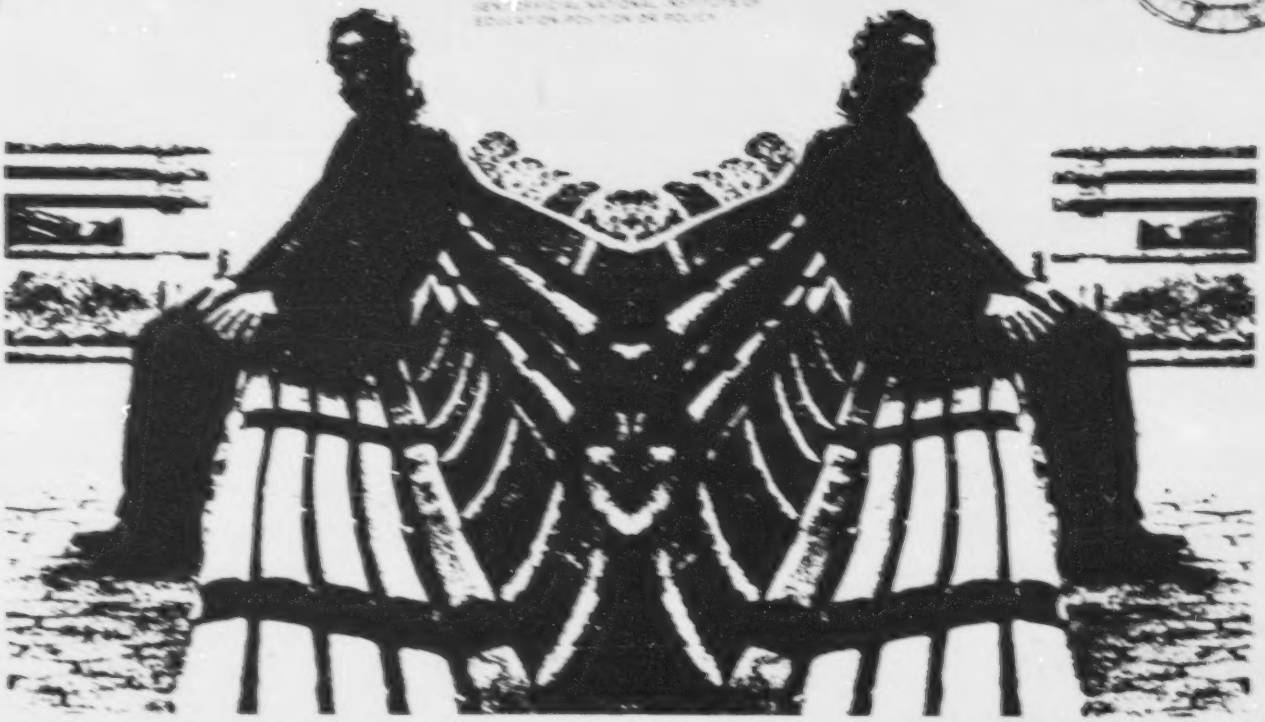

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FLIGHT OF UNEMPLOYED SINGLE FARM WORKERS

The Response of the University to a Social Problem Through In-culture Research

1974

Edward St. John

Postgraduate Researcher

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Many people deserve recognition for their assistance in the preparation of this report and the projects that contributed to it.

Bill E. Durant, Extension Assistant Specialist and director of the single-men projects, James Becket, State Department of Education, Orville E. Thompson, Chairman of the Department of Applied Behavioral Sciences, and Alex McCalla, Dean of the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences contributed greatly to the report through conversation and comments on the rough drafts. University Extension also assisted in the preparation of the report by making their files available.

The single men who live in Stockton and Sacramento, under the direction of Bill Durant, assisted in the preparation of two earlier reports, the results of which have been incorporated here. Faculty on the Davis campus and members of the Sacramento and Stockton communities served as resources for the projects.

Thanks to all the people who assisted in the preparation of this report and to the single-men projects.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Between May 1969 and October 1973, the University of California, Davis, Applied Behavioral Sciences Department was involved in a series of unique research and service projects designed to better the condition of single male farmworkers in two California Central Valley cities. The target population was unattached men who were part of a seasonal casual labor force that had played an important role in the development of California's agricultural industry in the forties and fifties and early sixties. In the sixties the employment system (of casual labor coupled with great mobility) in which they had learned to survive declined, and in some instances nearly ceased to exist. Their labor was no longer needed; they were replaced by mechanized farm equipment and migrant families. And in both instances their communities, known locally as skid row, were destroyed as a result of urban renewal. University involvement was directed toward resolving the problems confronting these men.

This monograph reports on the evolution of the projects that took place during the three and one-half years U.C. Davis was involved in the skid row research projects. Its purpose is twofold. First, the single-men's projects provide a successful case study of how the University, through its research and service functions, can contribute directly to the community. The single men in the Stockton and Sacramento skid row communities benefited both directly and indirectly from U.C. involvement. There were benefits to the University as well. The second purpose of the monograph is to document the process. In the future the University will be called upon to work directly

with community-based groups that have not formerly had access to the University. An understanding of the research and service methodologies used in these projects might be helpful to future researchers and Extension personnel.

THE PROJECTS

The projects are described here briefly in sequential order. They are separated into two phases: the first represents the development of service and research methods in the Sacramento Skid Row community; the second represents the application of these methods to the Stockton Skid Row community. Although staff involvement in the two projects overlapped (during the same period), the move to Stockton represented a significant shift in focus and increasing sophistication in methodology.

PHASE I: SACRAMENTO

During the first phase of the single-men farm-worker projects, the projects were housed in the Department of Applied Behavioral Sciences and administered by Jim Becket as Chairman of the Dean's Committee.

The committee appointed by J. H. Meyer, Dean, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, met with the Sacramento Single-men's Selfhelp Group (S.S.S.G.) on three occasions before project staff was hired. The needs of the S.S.S.G. identified in these discussions were: a) funds for secretarial help; b) funds for office operation; and c) exploration of employment and training possibilities. In June 1969 Bill E. Durant was hired as an Extension Specialist in Applied Behavioral Sciences to be a liaison person between S.S.S.G. and the campus. Although the committee addressed itself primarily to the employment and training needs of the men during the early part of this phase, efforts were made to obtain the funds needed to address the other concerns (secretary and office operations), and other

needs were identified as the project continued. U.C.D. efforts developed in the following areas:

1. Employment and Training Opportunities: Since U.C.D. was initially contacted because of the role it played in the mechanization of agriculture, which in turn affected the employment opportunities of single farm workers, it seemed logical that, in the early going at least, emphasis be given to employment opportunities and training. In July 1969 U.C. Vice President for Agriculture J. B. Kendrick, Jr., approved critical research funds in the amount of $18,437 for a research project entitled "The Determination of Retraining and New Employment Possibilities for Displaced Seasonal Farm Workers, with Emphasis on Single Men."[1] A variety of employment and training opportunities were researched. The only "successful" project (the only one actually launched) was a university-sponsored retraining program centered on the manufacture of Spira-Screens (a device used in wine production). A publication entitled "A Demonstration Project to Train Unskilled Farm Workers in Basic Shop Skills"[2] reports on this project (referred to in Chapter III).

2. Community Development: In the Sacramento project, University staff was not involved in organizing the single men. Organizing of the men in the subculture and of community support for their cause had taken place before they had formally contacted the university.

3. Service Projects: During the first year a majority of Bill E. Durant's time was spent in direct contact with S.S.S.G. problems, involved with their constant struggle for housing, medical care and welfare rights. His help in these areas was substantial, although they were not connected with specific projects (these efforts are discussed in Chapter III).

4. In-culture Research: The Sacramento Single-men's In-Culture Research project resulted in one publication (HOUSING SACRAMENTO'S INVISIBLE MAN, Farm Workers, Hustlers and Misfits[3]). The research report proved useful in the community advocacy process and to the institutions because of refinement of the In-Culture approach. It was learned that leadership could be developed among the group, and a member of the Sacramento In-Culture Research Team worked on the Stockton project. The first research project took place in the winter of 1969-70. (For further discussion see Chapter III.)

PHASE II: STOCKTON

In the winter of 1971 part of the Single-men's project was transferred to Stockton, a community with a functioning skid row community. Before the project began in Stockton, it was felt that the new location offered the opportunity to study men participating in a functional casual labor market and surviving in a skid row. The shift to Stockton represented a significant change for the project staff for two reasons. First, it represented a more consciously directed in-culture research and community development project, an attempt to transfer the techniques learned to a new setting; second, it was accompanied by an administrative change—the project staff was shifted from the ABS Department to U.C. Extension. Jim Becket, who had administered the first phase of the program, left the campus. The College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences had its third Dean since the project was initiated. Both were factors in the shifts of program administration. A new committee chaired by Associate Dean Glenn R. Hawkes (of Applied Behavioral and Economic Sciences) was appointed by Dean McCalla. Jon Elam of University Extension administered the project, fulfilling a role similar to that of Jim Becket, while University funding of the project officially remained with the ABS Department (other funding was received through a Title I grant to University Extension during this period).

The project developments during the Stockton phase of operation were:

1. In-Culture Research: A planned in-culture research project was the focal point of the Stockton project. Silas N. Ragster, a member of the Sacramento In-Culture research project, was added to the staff and sent to Stockton in advance of the rest of the project staff to investigate the skid row community and to do preliminary work toward organization of an in-culture research team. The research project continued throughout the winter of 1972-73 and resulted in a publication entitled Who Are These Men? A Study of the Tramps of Downtown Stockton (And the Agencies that Serve Them).[4]

2. Community Development: Organizing the men and community support was a goal of the Stockton project. Men were organized (and cards signifying membership in the organization were printed up). They learned to present themselves and their concerns to members of the community and to different public groups. The In-Culture research team was also developed in this manner.

3. Service: Efforts were made to secure the men with essentials needed for survival: jobs, housing, health care, and food. A store-front office was rented to provide a meeting place for the men as well as to provide them shelter from the cold in the winter of 1971-72. The project staff worked with the men in securing aid from different public and private service agencies in Stockton.

4. Casual Labor Market Assessment: The final project that was attempted was a survey of spot labor needs of households and businesses in Stockton. The report (THE CASUAL LABOR MARKET IN STOCKTON, CALIFORNIA: An analysis of Existing and Potential Spot Job Opportunities for Indigent Single Men[5]) on the project makes recommendations on how the casual labor system could be improved in Stockton.

RESEARCH METHODS

The In-Culture Research Method was used in both the Stockton and Sacramento phases of the single farm worker studies. Dr. Magoruh Maruyama, Professor of Sociology at California State College, Hayward, who originated this research approach, provided assistance to the staff in the early stages of the Sacramento project.[6] The first study involving the In-Culture Research began in February 1970 under the sponsorship of the Department of Applied Behavioral Sciences. Bill Durant, Assistant Specialist in Applied Behavioral Sciences, coordinated the project under consultation from Dr. Maruyama. The second study began in January 1971 and was also sponsored by the ABS Department. Bill Durant coordinated the second project with the assistance of Lester C. Adelman and Silas N. Ragster (a former member of the Sacramento In-Culture research team), both of the ABS Department. Paul Mapes, Director of the University Extension Stockton Community Education Project, also participated in the second study.[7] In both studies an In-Culture research team from within the subculture was actively involved in all phases of the research.

In-Culture research operates on the philosophy that the persons who participate in a culture or subculture are a valuable source of information that is important to their needs and lifestyles. Such persons have both the ability and the need, according to this philosophy, to translate that information into terms understood by the dominant society. In keeping with this philosophy of the In-Culture approach, the procedure used in the Sacramento and Stockton projects was as follows:

1. Organizing a group of people from the culture or subculture. An in-culture research team was (self) selected from within the group according to interest and peer judgments. More organizing was needed in Stockton since no viable organization or group such as that in Sacramento existed prior to U.C. entrance.

2. Direction of the groups was controlled by the In-Culture Research Team. In the Sacramento project the men met regularly at their living unit; in Stockton, meetings were held in a day (drop-in) unit. The projects were coordinated by U.C. staff.

3. Questions to be researched came from within the group and were developed into a usable research format by the In-Culture Research Team. A questionnaire with a taped interview was used. Research equipment and materials were supplied to the In-Culture Research Teams through the project staff.

4. Interviews were taken by the In-Culture research team members. Team members and interviewees were paid for each interview. Team members were responsible for writing up each interview and helped in the research write-up.

5. Responsibility for reporting the research remained with U.C. personnel. In the Sacramento project the In-Culture Research Teams worked on the monograph that reported on the project. In the Stockton project that staff was responsible for the write-up.

Through the In-Culture Research process the information gathered bout the single farm workers has been useful to their organization as well as to the academy. In one respect the In-Culture approach can be considered a community development, or organizing, technique. In another it can be viewed as a valid way to learn useful and relevant information about a subculture. The perspective one uses to evaluate the approach in large part determines the way it is viewed. A standard survey research approach was also used in the latter part of the Stockton project to determine present and potential casual labor market in the area.

A PROCESS REPORT

The university needs models for social research projects in the community, for the application of social research to the community, and for community service. The single-men's research projects provide a specific example of a series of social research and service projects oriented toward helping peoplein a community. They addressed social problems created in part y agricultural research. Although these efforts may not provide specific models for future researchers, the evolution of research and service methodology utilized in these projects will undoubtedly be of use to those in search of such models.

This monograph focuses on the process, or the way in which the single-men projects were developed, as well as on the research results. The actual procedure is not stressed as much as the evolution of research and service strategies. Those involved in the projects learned a great deal about community research projects, as exemplified in the changes that took place in their research and service methods. The next two chapters deal with the projects as they evolved in the Sacramento (Chapter II) and Stockton (Chapter III) skid row communities. These are followed by a chapter on the research results (Chapter IV), or what was learned about the men, their subculture and their communities. The concluding chapter (V) provides specific generalizations from the study and a discussion of the implications of this process for future researchers. This approach allows the reader to learn not only from what has been discovered but also from the way it was learned.

CHAPTER II

SACRAMENTO SINGLE-MEN'S SELFHELP GROUP, INC.: THE SACRAMENTO PROJECT

In 1969 when the Sacramento Singlemen's Selfhelp Group made contact with U.C. Davis, the plight of the Sacramento single-men subculture had already reached crisis proportions--survival was the primary concern of many in the group. A combination of factors--related primarily to the redevelopment of Sacramento's skid row and the mechanization of the agricultural industry in the Sacramento Valley, thus eliminating many formerly casual labor jobs--converged to create a particularly difficult situation of this subculture in the sixties. The organization of this wayward group into a viable self-help organization and the resulting contact with the city and county of Sacramento and with the University of California, Davis, is the story of a struggle for survival for a subculture, a story that continues even today, for survival remains an immediate concern of single males in the tramp and farm worker subculture.

The service and research activities undertaken by U.C. Davis during its four-year involvement were, in the final analysis, an attempt to help these men survive. Today, a question as to whether the men in the Sacramento skid row are any better off than they were before the university became involved would probably yield negative responses. But U.C.D. involvement with this community should not, indeed cannot, be evaluated in such rudimentary fashion. Instead, the Sacramento projects merit evaluation with respect to the skid row phenomenon in America--a dying phenomenon. In a dying environment survival is much more critical than in a viable self-contained community such as the Sacramento skid row once was.

Evaluated from this latter perspective, U.C.D. service and research activities in Sacramento "skid row" (or Labor Market as it was once known) take on a new significance.

This chapter describes the evolution of U.C.D. involvement with the Sacramento Single-men Selfhelp Group (S.S.S.G.) specifically, and with the Sacramento skid row community generally. U.C.D. efforts were directed toward helping a specific group of people, which generated a great deal of information about a dying subculture in the process. First, the background of this subculture in Sacramento is discussed. This is followed by a discussion of the events leading up to U.C.D. entrance into the scene and the nature of the university's involvement. Finally, this involvement is discussed in respect to the process taking place in the Sacramento community.

THE SETTING[1]

The Sacramento skid row, or labor-market area as it was once known, was a viable and contributing part of the Sacramento community in the 1940's, 1950's and early 1960's. In 1950 the area was officially designated by the city council for redevelopment. In 1951 and 1953 studies were prepared for the redevelopment agency which were specifically concerned with planning for relocation of the inhabitants (the first-known research on the area). In 1959 Davis McEntire's investigation was published. He described the Labor Market area (as it was in the fifties) as follows:

> The area is an outstanding slum. Buildings are delapidated; amenities are lacking; disease, alcoholism, and petty crime are prevalent. Most of the residents are past middle age, many being advanced in years. Many have physical handicaps other than age. Nevertheless, a large majority are self-supporting by employment; a minority depend on public assistance or pensions. Employment is mainly casual, mostly non-agricultural. . . . The area is a place where low income single men can live cheaply, where they can find jobs, and where they can find recreation and acceptance.[2]

Although undoubtedly an eyesore to the Sacramento community as a whole and to the state legislators and officials whose offices were nearby, the labor-market area was self-contained; people who lived there, largely single men, could find work and recreation. Since public attention was directed toward the area, initially because of the city's plans to redevelop, it was easy to understand why the housing situation has remained one of the primary concerns of the men who have remained (even after their physical community was demolished). Another related event that was silently taking place during the same period (the fifties and sixties) was the mechanization (and decline) of casual labor opportunities in agriculture and related areas.

McEntire's report analyzed several possibilities for the approximately five thousand homeless men in a twenty-four-block section of the redevelopment area. McEntire concluded that a new housing development should be planned and adapted to the living requirements of the homeless male population. Architectural designs for such a development were drawn up, a site was chosen, and a local developer was contacted.[3] However, the project was never realized.

The Redevelopment Agency's final relocation report filed in 1964 revealed that, although forty-six percent of the skid row population actually entered the relocation work load:

> . . . over 90 percent of the individuals resided in the older hotels and flop houses which dot Sacramento's West End and almost to a man they indicated that they intended to continue living in similar hotel-type accommodations. . . . Experience in this project. . . showed that when our relocation staff members went into the hotels these highly mobile men were no longer there and were not reflected in our case load.[4]

It seemed apparent from the report that the city, or the Redevelopment Agency at least, did not concern itself with the transient and migratory

male workers, part of the casual and seasonal agricultural labor force. As The Relocation Profile put it: ". . . it became evident that these individuals (mobile workers) were no longer attracted to Sacramento so many of the recreation facilities, such as card rooms, pool halls, taxi-dance establishments, burlesque theatres and bars they frequented are no longer in existence. . ."[5] Instead many of the workers who continued to visit Sacramento slept "in a 'shantytown' bordering both the American and Sacramento Rivers, which rapidly became a hobo jungle and was finally torn down."[6]

In addition to losing their physical support system (housing and recreation facilities) the subculture was also losing its financial support system--the casual-labor market--through another simultaneous process. Numerous factors contributed to the decline of the casual-labor market. One contribution, for instance, was demolition of the labor-market area in Sacramento, the single dependable area for securing part-time workers. The mechanization process, however, has been the major factor in the decline of casual-employment opportunities generally. And in a subculture dependent on seasonal agricultural employment, the mechanization of agricultural production (which occurred in the Sacramento Valley) has magnified the economic crisis of the subculture of concern here.

Mechanization has been a phenomenon that has drastically contributed to the decline of the skid row way of life everywhere. As Samuel Wallace puts it in Skid Row as a Way of Life: "In every single activity which formerly provided the homeless with work, employment possibilities have either been drastically reduced--if not eliminated--or the labor force has been unionized."[7] In short, since 1940, the mechanization of agriculture, lumbering and construction has vastly reduced the number of jobs for men with mobile habits. It just so happens that the men of this Sacramento

single-men's subculture who stayed in the Sacramento area have had an employment system closely aligned with agriculture (see Chapter IV for a discussion of the subculture).

These two factors--redevelopment (or demolition) of the labor-market area and decline of the casual labor market through agricultural mechanization--converged to create a particularly critical "crisis of survival" for the single men who were part of the Sacramento skid row community. Their lifestyles and survival mechanisms were gradually demolished by developing systems (Redevelopment, Agricultural Research, etc.) that were in conflict with the lifestyle of this group.

UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE[8]

The University of California, Davis, became involved with the Sacramento skid row community on a formal basis after it was contacted by a community-organized group of men from the Sacramento single-men subculture. Understanding the background and goals of the organization is important to gaining an understanding of the nature of the involvement between S.S.S.G. and the university. Needed in addition when considering the U.C. Davis attempt to respond to the problems of this subgroup is some reference to the organization of the university in its attempts to respond to this group.

The Sacramento Single-men's Selfhelp Group contacted the University of California, Davis, with requests for help in the spring of 1969. The fact that an organized group would contact the campus as a method of finding solutions to their immediate and long-term problems is not uncommon--growers, agricultural industries, and government agencies do it. But for a community organization to contact the university and get any response was unique at that time. S.S.S.G. was a unique group in many ways and U.C.'s response was unique as well.

Community organizing efforts in the Sacramento skid row community began in the winter of 1966-67. The spring before, a U.C. Davis student (George Winter) and a Sacramento State College student (Bill Durant) made contact with the community while trying to track down votes for the farm workers union. The Sacramento Single-men's Selfhelp Group (originally called Southside Single-men's Selfhelp Group to get Yolo County support[9]) was formed initially as a result of the farm labor movement. The two organizers had altruistic interests fitting with the day (Winter was an advocate of the Student Worker lliance). The single-men's group, exemplified by their long-time leader Abel Chacon (the third president of the group), were concerned about their own plight. Their efforts proceeded and gradually grew during their first few years. Their activity included protests at the City Council meetings and County Supervisor meetings at the Capitol building, and eventually t the University. They were also able to secure badly needed housing and ood during this period.

At the time S.S.S.G. contacted the University the needs they articulated were: 1) funds for secretarial help; 2) funds for S.S.S.G. office operations; and 3) the exploration of employment and training programs. Soon after U.C.D. became involved with the single-men's group and Bill Durant was hired as an Extension specialist, a better defined set of goals was developed by the organization. These included: 1) adequate housing; 2) adequate medical care; 3) a living subsidy; 4) job training and jobs; 5) the right to participate in democratic process.

Durant developed a history of S.S.S.G. soon after he was employed by the university. At the time the organization represented a unique example of "grass roots" organization for a variety of reasons. As Durant put it at that time:

> It (S.S.S.G.) has an articulate and established leadership; it is an organization composed of men who have never really been thought of as being organizable; and finally, it has had the self-initiative, patience and perseverance to work for social change by 'going through channels.'
>
> The concept of self-help is very important to the group because it is one of the few things they have through which they feel they can maintain their dignity. To the group, self-help means these things: 1) seeking out on their own individuals and agencies who are charged with responsibility of providing services to citizens; 2) presenting their problems, and 3) matching the group's resources with the outside resources in an all-out effort to bring about necessary solutions. . . . Using this technique of self-help, the group has achieved success in attaining some of the goals they have set for themselves.[10]

Before U.C. involvement with the group their primary success had come in the area of housing. In the winter of 1967-68 the group was able to provide living facilities through their own efforts coupled with donations. They housed over 700 men for four months. The building was destroyed by redevelopment.[11] The following winter a pilot program through S.S.S.G. and Sacramento County General Assistance housed nearly one thousand men for five months. In 1969 when S.S.S.G. contacted U.C. Davis the group had housing at 2700 Front Street, which solved the housing problem at the time.[12] The group had also had some success in obtaining health care (through the volunteer efforts of a private doctor) and general assistance (through a work program with the county).[13]

For S.S.S.G. the U.C. commitment was a morale booster, as exemplified by the following passage from Durant's first report:

> Just the fact that the University has made a commitment to work with the group has proved beneficial to the organization, even though help in concrete terms has been slow in coming. The men seem to view the University as a place where magical things happen. It seems to be thought of in much the same way one might think of heaven or hell; you're sure they exist, but they were never intended for you. The University involvement has acted as a morale booster for the men and, thus, has strengthened the organization internally.[14]

For the University, however, the commitment to help the single-men's group was like opening a Pandora's box. Although the University has had clearly defined social service functions for a century, it found itself ill prepared to respond to a social problem of this nature.

The committee appointed by Dean Meyer to oversee the projects was faced with critical problems. This was reflected in the final committee report when Jim Becket, Chairman of the Committee, stated: "I was never completely sure who was running the show, so to speak, and never felt comfortable about the arrangements. Sometimes I felt I was exceeding my authority. . . other times I felt like I wasn't assuming enough. I hope that the situation can be clarified as the committee, and the chairmanship, changes. . . ."[15] In short, throughout the first phase of operation the role of the University and the committee was unclear.

Committees have often been used for University research projects (then and now) since many of the service and research efforts of the University are mission-oriented and cross departmental lines. However, in this instance there was clearly no precedent for the committee to follow. The effort was exploratory--"to develop relationships and programs"[16]--and as a result its membership wasn't even certain during this early going whether the University activity was to be research or service in nature. The result was confusion and, incidentally, an explorative and at times creative effort. This phase of U.C. involvement, described in the remainder of this chapter, was clearly an effort to better define the role of the University in efforts to address social problems, as well as a sincere attempt to help a disenfranchised group of people.

UNIVERSITY INVOLVEMENT

In the spring of 1969 the Sacramento Single-men's Selfhelp Group

and the University of California, Davis campus, allied themselves in an attempt to solve the problems of single male casual farm laborers who lived in Sacramento. Alliance with the University seemed to hold a mystical promise of success for the single-men's group, while for the University it created new organizational problems. Then the University soon became conscious of the fact that there was no precedent for this activity, which attached uncertainty and ambiguity to every response or action. S.S.S.G. soon began to develop caution as well; it did not want the University to take credit for what its own organization had done or would do. Thus, although an alliance was formed between the two organizations, it was unwieldy at best.

For the project staff the uneasy alliance caused a conflict of allegiance that had a potential impact on the services provided and actions taken. Durant considered this situation a problem (never fully resolved), as reflected in the following passage from his first report:

> It is my feeling the University became involved in the project as a result of what I call an institutional "gut level reaction" to a very serious and real problem. The decision to become involved was made under pressure, pressure exerted by a combination of factors. The University was confronted with a problem which had caused it considerable embarrassment in recent years. . . . A committee was quickly formed, a few meetings held, and a project implemented. Let me make myself clear. I am not accusing anyone of questioning the individual sincerity of the people involved. What I am saying is that this project is going to suffer and it has already suffered because of the manner in which it was begun.[17]

S.S.S.G. and the University saw the same problem in different ways. For the men the problems of employment, training, office and clerical support, medical care, housing, and voting rights were immediate, whereas the University saw the problem primarily as an academic issue--an employment problem for single farm workers resulting from mechanization of agriculture, a problem for which they were partially responsible. Combined, however,

the single farm workers organization, the University and the project staff were at least able to address the problems of the single-men's group.

At first this entailed addressing the problems articulated in the first meetings--clerical and office support and job development. Later the University, through the project staff, began to assist the men in addressing their other immediate concerns--health care, housing, and voting rights--and the academic concerns of the University. During the first two years the project began to unfold; the development of employment opportunities, service through self-help, and In-Culture research became the combined activity of the two groups.

The University tried to address the men's immediate concerns. Providing financial support for clerical help and office space for the group were outside the jurisdiction of University research and Extension activity. However, the University was successful in supplying clerical help through outside contacts, although they had no success at arranging financial support for office space. Thus, at first one of the primary concerns of the University became the development of Employment Alternatives.

1. Development of Employment Alternatives: "The single farm worker will not allow himself to be cast off like an obsolete tool" (Abel Chacon, organizer, S.S.S.G., 1967). One of the primary goals of S.S.S.G. when it was formed in 1967 was to develop employment alternatives through new employment opportunities and job training. Since the University felt some responsibility in this area and such was articulated as one of the primary concerns of the group when it contacted the University, the committee decided to address its early efforts primarily toward the resolution of this issue.

"The initial idea relative to employment and training was in the

area of recreation site development and other similar projects such as highway beautification."[18] It was felt that such projects would utilize the skills the men had acquired in their years in agriculture and be in keeping with an employment style the men were used to. To pursue this idea Durant took the idea to William Penn Mott, Jr., Director of the California Department of Parks and Recreation. Although Mott was receptive to the idea, which he saw as similar to the Civilian Conservation Corps of the depression years, he was not at all sure of its feasibility. As it turned out the proposal could not legally work--two years earlier an attempt had been made to involve young people from San Francisco Hunter's Point in a similar project. "They tried to involve them in a project at Angel Island, but were forced to discontinue the project for two reasons: 1) the San Francisco labor council objected because they had laborers in their unions who needed the work, and 2) there is a public works law which states public works projects over a certain amount must be put up for bid before private contractors, who use only union labor."[19] Similar ideas were developed regarding the ecology movement and even projects on the U.C.D. campus, but led to similar dead ends.

Thus, ". . . (the) major area of endeavor concerning training and employment centered around the manufacture of the Spira-screen."[20] This was a device used in the wine industry designed and developed by R. J. Coffelt of the U.C.D. Ag Engineering Department as an improved system of screening the juice from the crushed grape. Initially it was felt that the manufacture of the device might one day provide viable business for S.S.S.G. (manufacturing the device) as well as provide training for some of the men. Funds (in the amount of $4,640) were secured for the project from a vocational education grant from the State Department of Education.

Five men were selected from the organization to work on the project. Interest on the part of the men in the organization was not as high as anticipated originally; the selection process that had been developed was not put to use since only five interested men could be found. The feasibility of the project probably should have been questioned at that time, and modifications made to insure success.

As Becket put it in his final committee report: "It may be that the training program was an education for us more than for the men from S.S.S.G., with a major conclusion being that the Spiri-Screen is not an appropriate machine for training purposes, nor for manufacture by a corporation such as one S.S.S.G. might form."[22] The authors of the final report on the project (published by the American Society of Agricultural Engineers) reached the following conclusions about the project:

> 1. The most effective techniques for teaching the basic shop skills were (a) having the trainees compete with one another in the classroom in order to obtain the correct answer, (b) having the more capable trainees help the less capable trainees in learning skills, and (c) having the trainees work on the research machines during the practice sessions.
>
> 2. The manner in which the personal problems of the trainees were handled were not entirely satisfactory. . . .
>
> 3. The decasualization process included measures taken during the training program to help the trainees adjust their lifestyles to fit the structure job situations, for which they were being trained. This process was not strictly organized as part of the training. . .[23]

Thus, the campus training program met with only limited success. The men, who were already at least semiskilled from agricultural work, could be trained to work in the machine shop. However, their previous employment pattern, resulting from the casual farm labor market, was not as easily overcome. To overcome the casual employment pattern more time would have to be spent working with the men on the personal and social (as well as

mechanical) skills. And even with this modification one should consider whether decasualization should be an objective of the training program of the single men who had survived in the casual labor market.

2. Service (Through Self-Help): The self-help concept was built into the S.S.S.G. organization long before the University became involved. The organization (and not the University) deserves the credit for gaining what public services they could muster. This includes gaining the services of the University in the first place. However, the University, primarily through the efforts of Bill Durant, was able to assist S.S.S.G. in its self-help efforts.

Sacramento Single-men's Selfhelp Group was organized originally to help the single male farm workers in the Sacramento area in their struggle for survival. Self-help was their theme, although they wished public assistance where possible. The following are some of the areas the single men and the University were cojointly involved with:

a. Medical Care: Medical care for the single male farm worker was "wholly inadequate and in some cases non-existent."[24] S.S.S.G. felt that U.C.D. had responsibility to S.S.S.G. to remedy this problem. Durant contacted the Medical School (located in Sacramento) and as a result a public health program (with a public health nurse working regular visits, a health trailer, sick visits, etc.) for the men was planned and implemented. At the time of his first report Durant stated: "The medical program is functioning successfully."[25]

b. Voting Rights: The University also assisted the group in the area of acquiring voting rights. Through contacts with Professor Kellis Parker of the U.C.D. Law School, S.S.S.G. was able to get assistance of a third-year law student, Miss Elaine Walson, in the preparation of a bill to

restore voting privileges to in-state transients. At the time Durant wrote, "It is my personal feeling that this is one of the more important activities which have been aided by the involvement of the University."[26] The bill was formally introduced to the State legislature by Assemblyman Edwin Z'berg (AB 1861) in 1969 and was defeated on the assembly floor that year.

c. Other U.C. Service Efforts: In addition to the above the service activities with which U.C. Davis was formally identified during this initial phase were the job-training efforts (mentioned above), the In-Culture research, and a self-help effort as well (discussed separately in Chapter III).

d. S.S.S.G. Self-Help Efforts: In addition to basic survival and the needs outlined above, S.S.S.G. had as its goals to: (1) provide adequate low-cost housing for single men, and (2) gain a living subsidy for the single men. Durant and other project staff helped the organization in their efforts to gain these ends. Assistance in the housing area came primarily through the In-Culture research report on housing and the drafting of proposals. However, S.S.S.G. had been involved in a struggle for housing and public assistance before U.C. was involved and after project staff left. Jon Mayhew of Sacramento Public Assistance worked with the group in their efforts to gain housing (several alternatives have been explored) and general public assistance. There has been some success in these areas although it is limited.

3. In-Culture Research: The In-Culture research project was started in February 1970 by the Department of Applied Behavioral Sciences. The project was coordinated by Durant and Dr. Magoruh Maruyama, originator of the in-culture research method. This method was outlined in Chapter II. The In-Culture team met weekly with Maruyama and twice a week with Durant.

It provided the men in the Center with the opportunity to present their own views on their situation. The project began with a great deal of vigor on the part of the men, as reflected in the following passage from Durant's first report:

> Because there is little if any valid information existing which identifies the men, their needs, and life styles, we feel this information can best be gathered by the men themselves. This is the underlying philosophy of the project. The men know what is important and relevant to them and, therefore, know what questions to ask. They also have a need and desire to tell the rest of society who they are, what they need, and how this society can help them achieve their goals. . . . They also feel, as we do, that one of their own most valuable resources is the information the group has access to through its membership. They feel the information will explode many of the myths which exist about them. For example, all the men who lived on skid row are winos.[22]

The men interviewed by the research team lived at the housing facility at 2700 Front Street, Sacramento. Of the 774 men at the facility, fifty were interviewed. The first report from the group, a monograph on housing published in August of 1970, provided relevant information about who the men were and their living needs. The monograph concluded with specific recommendations about the living situation. The report proved useful to the men in their advocacy process within the city and county. The recommendations of the report have not yet been fully realized however. No other reports were written from the data gathered.

The in-culture research project had positive spinoffs for both the men and the University. For the men the project provided information useful to their own self-help efforts; it proved that leadership could be developed within the group and that they could communicate their own needs; and it provided an additional income source for the people involved. For the University the project provided an excellent laboratory to refine the in-culture research method, provided one avenue or way for the University

to assist the group, and helped refine their ability to work with disenfranchised groups in the community. The information gathered about the singleman should ultimately benefit both the men of this subculture and the academy.

4. Follow Up: In the winter of 1970-71 a similar project was initiated in the Stockton skid row community, which marked a turning point in the relationship between S.S.S.G. and the University. During the early phase of the operation, Abel Chacon had considered Durant his personal employee and had been reluctant to recognize the leadership abilities developed by men within the group. The transfer of the project provided a chance for the U.C. staff, which now included a former member of the Sacramento In-Culture team, to apply what they had learned to another setting. At first it was threatening to S.S.S.G. to have elements of their project transferred to another location. In the long run it may have proved most beneficial to all.

With the shift to Stockton, Durant became less identified with S.S.S.G. and more identified with the University. In this role he was able to provide assistance to S.S.S.G. in their self-help efforts while coordinating the project in Stockton--a more comfortable role to an Extension worker for the University. S.S.S.G. has continued its struggle with the Sacramento city and county, with some positive and some not-so-positive results. One positive sign for the group was a revenue-sharing allocation to the group, in the amount of $21,000 from Sacramento County.

U.C. INVOLVEMENT AS PART OF A SOCIAL PROCESS

U.C. involvement with the Sacramento Single-men's Selfhelp Group can best be evaluated if it is considered part of the social process taking place in Sacramento. U.C. Davis, through the single-men's project, attempted

to help S.S.S.G. in its survival struggle in the community. The University learned a great deal about the single-men's subculture from this project and the Stockton projects. U.C. involvement did aid the group in their survival during the four years of involvement, and today the plight of the Sacramento skid row inhabitants has probably not been as severe, at least overtly, as in other California Central Valley communities (as in Yuba City, where they were the subject of a mass murder during this same period).

Thus, in the short term, U.C. involvement aided the group in attaining health care, attaining participatory status in the community (city and county), and in better articulating their needs (through research efforts). U.C. involvement did not solve the problems of the single-men's subculture--it was not the 'horn of plenty' or magical institution it has been perceived to be by the group. However, in the long run, U.C. involvement with the S.S.S.G. organization and the single-men's subculture in Sacramento may have helped awaken the community to the needs of the group, which one day might aid in their resolution.

CHAPTER III

"THE PLACE"

THE STOCKTON PROJECTS

University of California, Davis, involvement with the Stockton skid row single-men's subculture began in January 1971 and continued through October 1973. The Stockton projects represented changes in the single-men's projects in regard to both target populations and program administration. The Stockton community presented a new laboratory for the University staff to develop their research and service methods further and make contact with a new population in an active skid row community. There was not a viable organization in Stockton ready and waiting to work with the University as there had been in Sacramento. Instead the new project had as its goals to develop an organization as well as to assist in the development of the community.

Primary responsibility for administering the program was transferred from the Department of Applied Behavioral Sciences to University Extension at the outset of the project, although the department continued to provide financial support for major parts of the project. The shift in program administration was due to changes in the administration of the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and to the departure of Jim Becket from the campus.

This chapter is about the evolution of the single-men's projects in Stockton and the evolution of the Stockton skid row community. For the city of Stockton, skid row symbolizes a struggle that has been taking place for over two decades--a struggle to remove a public eyesore. For the Stockton single male tramps, farmworkers, and alcoholics who comprise the Stockton skid row population, it is the story of a struggle for survival. And for the University the evolution of the single-men's projects in Stockton represents an increasing

sophistication and ability to address the needs of the skid row subculture.

THE SETTING

When the U.C.D. projects began in Stockton it was realized that the development of the situation in skid row had many parallels to the situation in Sacramento. Until the early sixties the Stockton skid row had been a viable and economically contributing part of the city. It was among the largest skid row communities in the nation, ranking fourth or fifth overall behind much larger cities.[1] Seasonal inhabitants and farm laborers were able to find lodging and entertainment here, and there was also a large permanent population of single men. A decade later this had all changed. The community these men had once known was demolished--a victim of redevelopment.

Thus, in the seventies, members of the single-men's subculture in Stockton encountered the same problems their counterparts faced in Sacramento. The hotels, bars, cafes, pawn shops and pool halls they had frequented were gone.[2] Today their needs include housing, food, and health care. The redevelopment of skid row has been an important issue to many concerned Stocktonians for two decades. But too often the concern has been focused on the skid row problems and too seldom on the needs of the single men. The skid row problem was not solved for Stockton by redevelopment, for the men became more dependent on social-service systems for survival when their community was destroyed.

In the fifties redevelopment was a source of controversy in Stockton. The target area for redevelopment was a nine-block area downtown known as "skid row," an area that was teeming with transients, pensioners, hustlers, hookers, and every kind of vice imaginable. More significantly, it had been one of the most important centers for farm laborers in the San Joaquin Valley. That is why the area was tolerated for so long by the Stockton community, and

why itinerant farm workers came to Stockton. There was plenty of work and plenty of workers, and plenty of local businesses to cater to the needs and lifestyles of these men.

There was considerable local debate about the redevelopment of this area, prior to its demolition. The campaign to rid Stockton of this area was led primarily by local groups, composed of middle- and upper-class Stocktonians. In a report, Can We Afford It?, the Stockton branch of the American Association of University Women advocated demolition of the area as a way of ridding the community of the problem. As they put it: ". . . it is highly likely that with a greatly changed environment, Stockton will cease to be a regular top on his (the transient individual's) winter or summer itinerary."[3] This sentiment typified the arguments for demolition. It was felt that once this area was cleaned up, new, more attractive businesses would locate themselves in the area.

Others did not see the problem quite as easily resolved. Stockton's city manager, John C. Lilly, disagreed with the "single men will vanish" theory in his Mission Report of July 1956.[4] Other cities that had tried a get-tough policy or to close down the skid row areas failed in their efforts. Opponents of redevelopment argued that the existing area could be upgraded. But arguments against redevelopment did not stop the advocates of the plan. As City Planning Commissioner Wilda Huffman put it in 1961: "We do not expect Utopia from this effort, but to sit on our hands hopefully waiting for a perfect plan is futile. . ."[5]

Over sixty hotels and rooming houses were destroyed in redevelopment.[6] The Redevelopment Agency's Relocation Report in 1968 showed that 67% of the individuals living in skid row relocated within a seven-block radius.[7] It had been the hope of the redevelopment proponents that the transients and winos

would relocate in other communities and become the economic problem of others. In Sacramento the same solution had not worked; Sacramento's single men did not disappear, but are still found today inhabiting the new downtown shopping malls and contiguous streets. In Stockton a similar pattern developed: Stockton single men relocated downtown and frequented the main shopping areas. And what has proven worse for the Stockton city has been the failure of new businesses to relocate in the area, thus giving the city no revenue for the redeveloped property.

Despite the fact that there was not a functioning single-men's organization in Stockton for the University to work with, as there had been in Sacramento, the Stockton single men had a history of self-help efforts. In Stockton their struggle has included self-sacrifice, sit-ins, public relations campaigns, tours and meetings with government officials and elected representatives. The story appears in the pages of the Stockton Record.

The single male farmworkers, transient laborers and others who composed the Stockton skid row community did not mobilize until after redevelopment had already started. In 1949 when a story headed "City Acts to Gain Government Slum Aid" was buried on page 17 of the Stockton Record there was little awareness of the pending problem within the skid row community. Active efforts on the part of the single men to secure housing did not begin until 1967 after redevelopment had begun.

In March 1967 Adam Romero, an organizer, led about 75 jobless single farm workers on a march to the welfare office demanding housing. Director of Public Assistance Russell Gray recognized the men's problems since the town was teeming with men who had formerly found $1-a-night housing in the redeveloped west end.[8] A long struggle persisted over the next half decade. Temporary housing in farm labor camps and crash meal programs have been provided through the

efforts of charitable organizations, federal grants, and public assistance, although the plight of the single male farm workers in the Stockton area remained largely unresolved and without ongoing solutions.

For the University Stockton represented a new laboratory for service and research single farm workers. Like Sacramento, the Stockton skid row had once been an active thriving subcommunity that was destroyed by redevelopment. In Stockton, like Sacramento, the single men stayed after their community was destroyed. And as in the other setting, there had been a history of self-help efforts, but unlike in Sacramento there had not been an organized group to contact the University. In Stockton, however, the project had a more experienced project staff.

UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE

The move of the single-men's project to Stockton represented a conscious decision by the University and the project staff to expand their efforts to a new location. At the time U.C. entered Stockton it was felt that the new location offered the opportunity to study men who were participating in a functioning casual labor market and a surviving skid row community. It offered the project staff and the University the opportunity to test and develop further its service and research methods and, at the same time, assist a wayward community group.

The Stockton single-men's project had two objectives at the outset: 1) to gather information through in-culture research; and 2) to develop an organization which could represent the interests of single workers who were living in the streets of Stockton. Community development, then, was a much more conscious aspect of the Stockton project than it had been in Sacramento. This new emphasis fitted the situation for two reasons. First, unlike in Sacramento, there was not an organized group to act as advocate for the

single men although their needs were certainly as great. Second, the administrative shifts within the University placed the single-men's project under the administrative jurisdiction of University Extension, which had a Community Development Unit that already supported community action programs in Stockton with Higher Education Act Title I funds.

The importance of organizing this group at this time cannot be over-emphasized. Since the nine-block area which once served the needs of the skid row community had been redeveloped, there was no place or facility to serve as a focal point in the community. Most of the downtown rooms that had not been destroyed were priced too high for the men during the off-season. Consequently, the men were forced either to tolerate the local missions or to live in the weeds. As a result of this situation the University rented a facility that was named "The Place," opened in November 1971, which served as the project's community center.

The Place became the main base of operation for the Stockton project. It was a day facility open to the men between 8:30 and 5:30 p.m. seven days a week. The opening of The Place was not advertised. Instead its existence was made known through street communication. Response to The Place was slow at first, but it gradually became widely used by the men. The Place served as a base of operation for the project research and community development activities.

UNIVERSITY INVOLVEMENT

"The Place" was the focal point for the Stockton project. The community organizing and development activity used The Place as an organizing point. It was where the In-culture research team met and many of their interviews were conducted. It became a community center for the men where they could go to get out of the cold (as many as 200 a day used the facility during bad weather) and where they could come together for food and entertainment. The Place had

limitations--it was not open for evening meetings and the men could not sleep there--but it was useful for the project staff and the men.

The second year in Stockton (1973) a follow-up study of the casual labor market in Stockton was undertaken and The Place ceased to exist. The follow-up study was undertaken to explore possible alternative sources of casual employment, an alternative that had not been fully explored during the first project phase. A pilot casual-labor center was proposed for Stockton but was not funded.

The components of the Stockton project are outlined below:

1. Community Development. One of the objectives of the project was to develop an organization that could represent the interests of single workers living in the Stockton streets. Prior to opening The Place, Silas Ragster began field research and organizing efforts. When The Place opened, the Community Development and In-Culture research efforts were started simultaneously. The community development goals were discussed as follows at that time:

> The community development part of our activities has two goals: 1) organizing the men and 2) organizing community support. We are using the In-culture Research Team as our Advisory Committee, but we are planning to hold elections for a permanent Advisory Board. One of our biggest problems has been explaining who we are and where our money comes from. We also had a problem getting men to identify with The Place. The tramps began to participate without much problem, but there are a large number of men who have families in South Stockton. . . . They don't need The Place and have no stake in keeping it open; they created a lot of hassles. . . .[9]

Various techniques were used to organize the men, the most obvious being the utilization of The Place as a central meeting place and organizing an advisory board. Membership cards were also printed to "formalize the organization and increase the men's identification with The Place."[10] A Tramp newspaper was printed and distributed on the streets as well.

These efforts were based on the self-help concept: to organize the men so they could help themselves. The project staff also advocated for the

group in the community and in the University to gain the needed services for the men. Since their community was "redeveloped" many of the men were literally living on the streets. For these men survival is a constant struggle and many of the everyday essentials taken for granted by most of society are denied them. The following summarizes the types of services advocated for:

a) Service to meet immediate needs: Securing food, clothing, and shelter is a struggle for many of the Stockton tramps. "San Joaquin county does not have food, does not have food stamps; they are a commodity county. In order for the men they must have an address and cooking facilities."[11] Since most of the men do not have permanent residence with cooking facilities they had to depend on hustling or local missions. A daily pot was organized through The Place. As Durant put it in his first Stockton report: "All of the food is donated and/or hustled. Items which must be purchased are paid for out of donations that the men make. We have been averaging about $3 a week. One of the men has worked out an arrangement with a butcher who saves scrap meat for us. The butcher is paid--not much, but something."[12] Other efforts were also made to arrange food for the men. In February 1972 the UCD Associated Students granted $800 to the project for "rental of kitchen facilities, utility costs, food supplies, and cooking equipment." According to the transmittal letter the money was granted "in the two-fold hope that it will assist the single men in Stockton and that it may encourage the University to give more than token support to assist persons affected by University research in farm machinery."[13] Men could eat at The Place while it was open.

b) Service to meet long-term needs: A major aspect of the development efforts consisted of researching the social services available to the men. In addition to gaining information on social service from the men through

In-culture Research, the project staff visited the various (private and public) service agencies with the men, both as facilitators for the men and as researchers. Although most communities have developed social service and welfare systems they are seldom intended for able-bodied men, which is the case in Stockton. Management and employers in most public agencies (public assistance, the county hospital, etc.) are not naturally sympathetic to the needs of these men. They usually have to be deathly ill or to commit themselves to the hospital as drunks needing rehabilitation to receive any help at all. The result is the situation described below:

> Survival is a full-time job to the homeless men who inhabit downtown Stockton in winter. To a large degree, "making it" depends on a variety of the skills of the subculture: getting discarded food (produced from refuse, old bread, day-old plastic wrapped sandwiches, nearly-soured cottage cheese, etc.), makeshift sleeping accommodations, various combinations of sleeping bags, blankets, tarpaulins, plastic sheeting, partially sheltered by weeds, walls, or sunken areas (Mormon Channel); also panhandling and, occasionally, outright stealing.[14]

Housing is perhaps the most critical problem facing the men. When their community was redeveloped, alternative housing was not provided for the single men who had lived on the west end. Instead a pitiful situation has developed which is described in the following passage from Who Are These Men?:

> The essential characteristic of civilized life would seem to be shelter--a place for repose, a place to stop having to keep on walking, the proverbial place to get out of the rain. The West End Redevelopment Project of the 1960s razed 64 hotels and rooming houses, leaving only two hotel-type facilities in that area, the Holiday Inn and The Lee Center . . . . "Downtown Stockton" today comprises only 37 hotels, offering 2,381 rooms at rates of $2.50 to $3.50 a day and $40-85 a month. A typical member of the single male population, about fifty years old, usually makes barely enough money doing piecework field labor to cover lodging, let alone other expenses. And during the winter this kind of work diminishes to nearly zero . . . .[15]

The project staff and the organization the men developed made attempts to gain housing. Presentations were made to local government and civic groups, protests were tried, and nothing substantial resulted. Today, efforts are

still being made to improve the situation.[16]

2. In-Culture Research.

> "The In-Culture Research Team was given top priority when we opened The Place primarily because everyone was getting nervous thinking we might not be able to produce a document" Bill E. Durant.[17]

The in-culture research efforts were approached with a different, perhaps more professional, enthusiasm in Stockton than they had been in Sacramento. The situation was different; the staff was more experienced, and the organization less committed. In Sacramento the Sacramento Single-men's Selfhelp Group was in operation prior to the start of the research project; in Stockton there was no organization. And unlike in Sacramento, the Stockton organization did not have a live-in facility where men could meet at odd hours. In short, a situation existed in Stockton that did not easily build commitment to the research project; it was hard for the men to attach a meaning to the research other than providing some money.

However, the project staff knew the importance of the research component, both as a community development tool and as a requisite to University support. When the Sacramento project was initiated, Durant, the primary staff member, had not been informed that research was expected. However, the Stockton project started with a commitment to In-Culture research. The process the group went through was as follows:

> At first we thought the Team could be organized in approximately the same manner as the Sacramento Team. It wasn't long before we found this would be impossible. We made several announcements that there would be a meeting to talk about research. Nobody responded. It was then decided that we would hang butcher paper on the walls and ask the tramps to write down questions for research. The staff then wrote down questions--we had to start the ball rolling. Two days after the paper went up on the walls and with as much encouragement as the staff could provide, the men started to respond. We held impromptu research meetings every time a group would gather around the "question paper." After about two weeks, a lot of arguments, and two fist fights, we did some test interviews. . .[18]

A monograph entitled Who Are These Men?: A Study of the Tramps of Downtown Stockton (and the Agencies that Serve Them) resulted from the Stockton In-Culture research project.

3. Casual-Labor Market Analysis. A thread running through all phases of the single-men's worker projects was research oriented toward the development of employment alternatives. Even the In-Culture research carried this mission as its primary purpose, as is exemplified by the introduction to the Stockton "Single-Men's Research Interview Questionnaire":

> The purpose of this project is to determine your feelings about "spot job" employment. When we say "spot job labor," we mean that type of work where there are no regular working days or hours--you work when work is available and when you are available for work; and only for the number of hours it takes to complete the job.[19]

In addition to the In-Culture research projects a follow-up study of the casual labor market in Stockton was funded by the State Department of Education, Vocational Education Section. A random survey of households and businesses in Stockton was made to determine existing and potential spot-labor possibilities within the community. The results suggest that over one-tenth (13.16% ± 5%) of the households and nearly a quarter (24.04% ± 5%) of the businesses "presently hire casual labor in Stockton." Moreover, it was discovered that an additional half of the households and a quarter of the businesses "who have never hired casual labor indicated that they might be influenced to do so if one or more of the following conditions were met: (a) presence of a permanent spot-job employment office in a convenient place, (b) guarantee of high quality workers, and/or (c) adequate tranportation of workers to the job."[20] Thus there is both an apparent desire to work on the part of the single men, and an availability of employment options within the community, given some facilitating mechanism. As the report on the labor-market

survey put it:

> The data derived from this project indicate a widespread demand for casual labor and similarly, an all-pervasive willingness on the part of the "downtown single men" to supply it. The stage is set for a meeting of the minds between the well-dressed "Anyone who wants a job can find one; no one has ever knocked on my door asking to clean up my yard."[1] and the down-and-out "This used to be a good town for a working man; today there's nothing."[21]

The final report on the Stockton projects included a proposal for a casual-labor center. "The functions of the center would include: (1) screening, (2) services, (3) work orientation and training, (4) equipment, and (5) promotion."[22] The project staff tried to get a pilot casual-labor center funded through Vocational Education, but without success. Unfortunately for the staff (and I might add for the Stockton community and the University) the single-men's projects ended when the labor-market study was completed. After nearly four years of questioning on the part of the project staff an apparent answer was at hand: it lies within the community.

For the University, the completion of the single-men's study was a sign of the times. The Community Development unit in U.C. Davis University Extension ceased to exist after the project was completed.

U.C. INVOLVEMENT AS A PART OF A SOCIAL PROCESS

Survival does not come easily for the Stockton tramp. A decade ago there was a subcommunity in Stockton where the transient farm laborer could find work, housing, and entertainment; today there is not. For the men there are only the streets of downtown Stockton, a tough place in which to survive. And their very presence here has led the downtown to deteriorate even more.

The University became involved with the Stockton tramp subculture through direct decisions and actions. The project staff had hopes of helping these men who had worked on farms up and down the state. Their efforts provided

some immediate services to the men in the form of a meeting place and a self-help organization. However, today these same men may be no better off than before. They are still without the security of housing, work, and food.

However, the Stockton single-men's projects can also be evaluated as a part of the larger social process taking place in Stockton. It has been twenty years since the Stockton community decided to redevelop the Stockton skid row. The problems that have been created since redevelopment are both new and old. They are new because the men no longer have a community of their own and they are on the streets downtown; an area that has been losing shoppers to outlying shopping centers. Yet the men and their lifestyles have been in Stockton for decades and, although many local people hoped the contrary, they did not disappear when their community was redeveloped.

CHAPTER IV

TOWARD A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF SKID ROW COMMUNITIES

The plight of the casual seasonal laborer has long been of interest to social researchers. In his early works, the renowned sociologist Max Weber "sought to uncover the historical sources of the individualism that prompted the farm workers to prefer the uncertainty of seasonal labor to the security of personal subservience."[1] Although the conditions for the seasonal farm laborer of nineteenth century Europe differ drastically from those of today's casual farm labor in California, the spirit of independence and individualism could well have motivated the choice of both groups. The uncertainties of the casual-labor market must have been outweighed by the freedom and attraction this life entailed.

Skid row is generally considered a uniquely American phenomenon.[2] It is the run-down area found in almost every American city where the homeless can and do live. It is a collection of bars, second-hand shops, card rooms, barber colleges, all-night movies, missions, flop houses, and dilapidated hotels which cater specifically to the down-and-outer, the tramp, the alcoholic, and the drifter. "Although the homeless have existed both here and elsewhere for centuries, 'skid row' did not come into existence until about one hundred years ago--near the end of the Civil War."[3] In the California Central Valley cities, skid rows have been the home and stopping place of the seasonal and casual farm laborer.

Skid rows have been on the decline during the past decade in California and elsewhere. A 1966 survey by Howard M. Bahr supported "the position that the population of American skid-row areas is declining; skid row is indeed 'on the skids.' Furthermore, the decline can be expected to continue and

accelerate as urban renewal programs now in the planning stages are carried out."[4] Redevelopment is certainly one of the major causes for the decline of skid rows in this study as it has been elsewhere; it has been the tendency for most cities to redevelop their most-run-down sections at the first opportunity. The problems usually associated with skid row have surely not disappeared when these areas have been redeveloped, however. In the same study (66) Bahr concluded that the "declining (skid row) population need not imply a decrease in the absolute size of the homeless population, but rather seems a result of a number of factors operating to disperse the homeless population skid row."[5] In fact, the transients, the homeless, and the casual workers have proved the most difficult members of skid row communities to relocate; instead, they have repopulated in areas close to their old homes.

In the two communities studied, redevelopment played a major role in creating a crisis for the men and, indirectly, their communities. Prior to redevelopment the men considered skid row their home. After redevelopment the men were forced to survive on the streets of their community. Redevelopment is not an evil force--there are examples when communities have used redevelopment funds in more positive fashion--but it helped magnify the problem.

The remainder of this chapter is about the men--it uses data they have gathered about themselves to tell their story. Conclusions on the projects and the usefulness of the in-culture research approach are in the following chapter.

TRAMPS, ALCOHOLICS, AND FARMWORKERS[6]

One of the purposes of the two single-men's projects was to assist various public and private agencies of Stockton and Sacramento to deal better

with the indigent single men who populate the downtown streets. Most of the agencies, however well intentioned, have failed to deliver the necessary life-supporting services to these people. The major stumbling block is a nearly universal misapprehension as to who these men are. The various gencies' approaches are well suited to the needs of people who fit specific categories. For instance, the employment office is better equipped to deal with unemployed professional or blue-collar workers than with casual laborers. Unfortunately the downtown men do not fit into any of these standardized categories.

In the majority of the agencies, people respond to any discussion of the single men with puzzlement at first and then with a comfortable glint of understanding that says, "Oh, yes, you mean the alcoholics downtown." It is extraordinary to observe an entire class of people who are described in terms of a disease. The only other examples that come to mind are lepers and, perhaps, in the wards of state hospitals, psychotics, schizophrenics, etc. Most people, social workers included, insist on referring to the downtown men as alcoholics. That is apparently because drunkenness is seen as the most prominent and outstanding characteristic of this subculture.

Merchants of downtown commonly refer to the men as bums, winos, and transients, and see them as a problem for the image of downtown. Uptown ladies do not want to shop there any more. They do not even like to walk on main streets, let alone browse and windowshop. An ex-mayor of Stockton, talking to one of the merchants during an interview, thought the elimination of the old Skid Row was ill-planned and had brought about problems for downtown. The men from Skid Row, once confined to their own area, are now in evidence around women's apparel stores.

In reality the men can hardly be considered alcoholics. The question "Do you drink?" is universally answered "Yes." The question "Why do you drink?" was answered "Loneliness," or "Nothing else to do," or some other response revealing the hardships of their way of life. But only 4% consider themselves to be alcoholics. Other studies have documented the fact that only a small percentage are alcoholics.[7]

When public and government officials refer to these men, they do not seek to define an illness or to isolate a condition; rather, they want to classify a phenomenon which they do not understand--so the favorite word is alcoholic. This term supposedly explains who they are, what their problem is, what is wrong with them, why they are a nuisance, and why they are worthy of contempt. Rational people understand that alcoholism is a disease, that the issue is one of body chemistry rather than personal morality. But emotionally the community, by and large, sees the Skid Row wino as a man who could not face life, sought to escape reality, and ended up as an alcoholic.

So the men are labeled alcoholics and dealt with as such. The programs designed for them are alcoholic programs, yet unsightly men remain ubiquitous on the downtown streets. The issue is not one of semantics, but rather of self-deception. Alcoholism is there, but alcoholism is not the only "issue," not even the principal one. Public agencies, reflecting the attitudes of society at large, have failed at accurate identification of the significant characteristics of this subculture.

Academics, church members, City and County planners, and other "liberals" have a different label for this elusive population--single farm workers. And it is true. Most do farm work when it is available; most gain their subsistence this way. Men who always look intoxicated in winter are s[illegible] on the streets

in late afternoons in summer, exhausted and thoroughly cooked by the sun, but unmistakably sober. Hence they are farmworkers, and these professional people choose to define them in terms of occupation rather than by their predominant illness.

To describe these men as farmworkers implies that they have arrived at the occupation of farmworker in the same way a person decides or is led to become a lawyer or a plumber or a fireman or a sanitation worker. Again, cheating on the labeling has the effect of conveying an entirely erroneous picture of the population in question and impedes any effort to deal with the social, economic, and health problems that exist.

How, then, do we define these men? What are the characteristics that would accurately define this group for the purpose of dealing more realistically with each individual as a human being.

Poverty

1. Almost all were born poor. The Bowery in New York might harbor fallen lawyers, but we have yet to find one in Stockton. The typical man was born fifty years ago somewhere toward the East and South of the United States. Had he stayed home, he would be poor and sedentary today. But he then had the choice of staying on the dirt farm or opting for:

Mobility

2. Moving around didn't guarantee striking it rich, but it surely seemed to be a lot more interesting for a depressed teenager in the most depressed part of the country to hop on a train or thumb a ride toward somewhere else, hoping to escape the Depression. He was eventually attracted to some kind of job on a federal project (or sometimes

with a private contractor), working on a dam or something, and learned:

A Trade

3. on the job. He was inevitably far away from home when this happened. Changing from location to location while keeping the same job, but generally working on projects--impermanent jobs with long and irregular hours, it seemed as if the kid was holding his own, becoming an accepted member of the:

Casual Labor Force

4. Through this mode of work--from dam to dam, from one lumber job to the next, from one mine to the next--a lifestyle was established. A man works long and hard for an unspecified length of time, the job ends, there is money in his pocket, and he takes some time off until the next job comes along and he doesn't feel the least bit guilty about not working when he has plenty of money. He has no dependents, he has usually remained:

Single

5. Because he has not "settled down"; that's not the way the life rhythms of this man have evolved. Actually, he probably did get married once or twice, but it didn't last. Actually, he had become permanently restless, one of the boys, and the likelihood of any one woman keeping him tied down to one location was dubious at best. There was mainly one thing that did interfere with his life's patterns when he was still a young man, and that was:

Military Service

6. He served in World War II and maybe in Korea, but he wasn't about to be a career army man, so he got out as soon as he could, and while other GI's went to work in factories to celebrate the new boom in consumer production, our man sought to go back to the kinds of jobs that he did before. But it was getting rough. The old casual labor market was drying up. The federal dam projects were completed. The upheaval and instability of the pre-war days were over, and most jobs were steady full-time jobs. He just wasn't going to make it in that kind of job. To stay in the casual labor lifestyle, he had no choice but to become a:

Farm Worker

7. Getting back to the soil, as when he was a kid back East. He followed the crops from Mexico to Canada, learning the various crops, working with Braceros and migrants. He made friends, and the male subculture of the work projects was transplanted to the "labor market areas" of the various agricultural centers up and down the fertile valleys of the West Coast. When the Bracero program ended, on December 31, 1964 (PL 88-203), agricultural businessmen, realizing that American farm workers would be demanding higher wages, accelerated the automation of their industry with the help of university research and development teams. By the middle 1960's, the moribund "labor-market areas" were removed by redevelopment and urban renewal projects--casual labor,

opportunities even in agriculture, were no longer available in the volumes that they once were. His neighborhood gone, his source of work greatly diminished, no family, no place to live, the casual laborer, now declared excess baggage, became:

A Drunk

8. or at least that's what everyone called him now. Not that he hadn't ever been plastered out of his mind before. That "labor market" had been a pretty wild place. Even if it was rather degenerate and garish, it was lively. And if our man didn't have money one day, then one of his friends surely did. And there were lots of good fights, too. But there was a community there. Life there hadn't been all that good. It was sordid and depressing sometimes, and the "labor market" reeked with every kind of exploitation of body and soul. But it was a life--a reeling raucous carnival.

Today our man is fifty (48.7 average) and decrepit and has nowhere to go and gets drunk almost all winter and works as much as he can in the fields during the summer.

But he's not an alcoholic, wino, or bum. He might have these qualities, but that's not what he is.

And he's not a single farm worker. He might make some money by working in the fields, and this might be the only way he can make money these days, but that's not his identity.

He is today what he has been ever since the day that poor, hungry, dusty kid hit the road, back during the Depression:

He's a tramp.

CONCLUSION

Once upon a time, the American economy required a work force of tramps. Now that era is past and the homeless men are the fossils.

The word "tramp" has a negative nuance to it and liberals might find that it sticks in their throats. But the tramp lifestyle was a legitimate and necessary mode in the days when a ready supply of casual labor was essential to the railroad and to operation of the lumber, mining, and agricultural industries. As we have seen, a special class of people pursued this style, led to it by their background and inclinations. They were, in a sense, the spiritual descendants of those men who went West to be ranch hands or miners, or joined the United States Army in the second half of the nineteenth century. These were not family men, but rough, tough adventurers; on the road, on the move, looking for a job, looking for a drink, looking for a woman, looking for a fight. These people are culture heroes today on television. What could be more American than the legendary wild West?

But, somehow, the tramps are not seen as model Americans. Just as Jesus Christ, translated into the Twentieth Century, might be scorned by many of the pious as a "hippie freak," so the members of the colorful tramp labor force are today despised as winos, transients, and bums.

Whether the tramp "could ever make it as a family man" is irrelevant. In a free-enterprise system, each person "makes it" the best way he or she can. Every individual chooses, or is forced to settle for, whichever way is best for him--married or single, white collar or blue, one job or many jobs, one home or many homes, drinking or teetotaling. So, the man downtown in the dirty clothes, walking nowhere in particular while the rest of society scurries by, is a tramp. And only when everyone realizes who the tramps are and what

a tramp is, will it be possible to initiate valid tramp programs. Then and only then can this obsolete population be reintegrated into the flow of the American economy.

Name-calling and false categories cannot obscure the fact that tramps are members of a legitimate subculture and cannot be written off as an aggregation of socially aberrant individuals. The test is simple. Skid Row is a community with a distinctive set of social norms. The men ought not to be treated as sick people but, instead, should be recognized as members of a subculture rendered superfluous by progress. The tramps have been relegated to society's junk heap. The metaphor is familiar (it is the American dream, the Kleenex philosophy): if it's too old, used up, or doesn't work any more--throw it away, cut it out, incinerate it. Whether it's a question of people, natural resources, buildings, or entire cities, the practice has been to exploit "it" for short-term gains and let someone else worry about the consequences.

While the "tramp issue" may seem trivial when measured against other social inequities of our time, it is not atypical. In fact, it is among the most visible symptoms of a malfunctioning society which holds people subservient to the dictates of the economy, rather than producing goods and services to meet real human needs:

Nonwhite Americans are welcomed into the job market during boom times; when there is a lag these people become surplus, potential disrupters of the civil order. Society doesn't know what to do with them . . .

The economy produces automobiles which pollute the air, then offers the consumer the privilege of buying more expensive gasoline to "do his part" in saving the environment . . .

Universities produce record numbers of Ph.D.'s even though the market is already flooded . . .

Most social and economic disequilibria can be glossed over with reports and statistics. Not so with tramps:

"Buddy, can you help me out, can you spare a dime?"

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

For nearly four years the University of California, Davis was involved in research and service efforts oriented toward helping the single male alcoholics, tramps, and farmworkers in Sacramento and Stockton to organize themselves to work on the resolution of their own problems. This monograph has been about the evolution of these projects as well as about the men and their problems. This chapter reports some of the general findings and understandings that have resulted from this involvement. The ending of U.C.D. involvement with the singlemen subculture does not signify a dwindling commitment to social research and service projects. Instead, the University is committing an increasing amount of its resources to the resolution of social problems. And an understanding of the process that has been documented here should be useful to future researchers and Extension personnel.

There is no long history of social action projects and social research in the University of California or in the Extension service, so there are few models to follow. This, of course, has a variety of implications for the projects that do exist. There are advantages to this situation since, after all, old models could well have restrictive norms limiting the alternatives that could or would be supported. In projects such as the one reported here, lacking a long history, a variety of research and service methods can be tried and experimented with. But a history in this area also signifies the somewhat hidden advantage of commitment of the institution to projects of this nature.

The following "conclusions" are brief summaries of lessons that have

been learned in these projects. They relate specifically to the single-men's subculture, to the University method of involvement, and to potential resolution of the single-men's problems.

Casual Laborers: The men in the single-men's subculture can best be described as casual laborers. Over the years they have acquired a working style that is oriented toward seasonal and part-time employment. Attempts to train these men for other employment situations involves a decasualization process--reeducation to different social and personal norms--in addition to specific skills training. Many of the men are already skilled workers and the acquisition of new skills does not pose a critical problem. However, retraining for the non-casual labor market brings about a series of critical lifestyle problems. In the one instance when the University attempted a retraining program this dichotomy was not realized and as a result it failed. Members of the subculture do consider themselves working men, however.

Single Men Can Be Organized: Members of the single-male subculture can be organized into viable and active self-help groups. In the case of the Sacramento project, the Sacramento Single-men's Selfhelp Group, an organization with a well-articulated self-help philosophy, contacted the University for its assistance. In Stockton an organization was also formed to take care of immediate needs and to undertake the research project. This particular subculture has in the past seldom been touched by community organizers or looked at by University researchers. Although they have problems that are similar to those of other disenfranchised groups, they have not had the altruistic "appeal" that other ethnic or other socio-economic groups have had.

Leadership Can Be Developed: The Sacramento group (S.S.S.G.) had a strong president for a number of years and when the University became involved the

in-culture research team proved to be a vehicle for developing new leadership talent. Members of the Sacramento team actually worked to help organize the Stockton group. In Stockton the in-culture research team developed the leadership talents to do the research project.

The In-Culture Research Approach Works: In both the Sacramento and Stockton projects the In-culture research method proved to be an effective way of organizing the men and gaining a better understanding about the sub-culture. The project staff felt the approach was more effective when the group was already organized and saw the needs for a research project of this nature.

A Casual-Labor Market: There is a potential casual-labor market in the community to provide a support system for these men. A substantial percentage of households and businesses already employ casual laborers. If there were a dependable way to secure part-time labor, a greater number of businesses and households alike would be more inclined to hire part-time workers (a finding of the final Stockton study). Prior to redevelopment, the skid row area in both communities functioned as a labor-market area where workers and employers could connect. A proposal for a casual-labor center was included in the recommendations of the final report of the Stockton project. Certainly this kind of alternative needs to be tried.

University Response: The University is not equipped to respond to social problems as it is to agricultural problems, and often there is a tendency to ignore the social implications of agricultural issues. In this instance the University was contacted after the problem had already reached crisis proportions. If the proper mechanism existed this contact could have been made before it was a crisis. Even after the University became involved, administration of the program caused new sets of problems.

In the long run, an organization in community development extension work similar to that of agriculture is needed, where there are field workers who can utilize faculty expertise as needed. In the short run the current experimental trial-and-error approach may be the only alternative.

OVERVIEW: THE SETTING FOR FUTURE STUDIES

Today, the people who manage higher educational institutions are starting to recognize a need to integrate social issues into the research, teaching, and service functions of the university. This shifting focus is perhaps best illustrated by the final report of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, completing what is the most extensive policy and program review in the recent history of American higher education. That commission emphasized that University research is likely to be needed even more in the future than it has been in the past, and that more emphasis should be given to social research.[1] A recognition of the need for an increasing focus on social issues in university research can be found in the various institutional levels of the U.C. system as well.

The imbalance between social service and research on the one hand and scientific and agricultural service and research on the other is being increasingly recognized and addressed in the U.C. system. The recommendations of the U.C. Academic Planning and Program and Review Board, which last year reported on agricultural research, emphasized a need for more emphasis on social interaction with agricultural research, by calling for College of Agriculture research on "human resources and rural communities."[2] On the Davis campus, the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences has reorganized around functional program areas and has stressed the need to integrate societal issues into the educational programs as a part of reorganization planning in 1972-73.[3] And the Department of

Applied Behavioral Sciences, the organizational unit which sponsored much of the single-men's research and is the most socially oriented unit in the College, has in the past year defined its mission as research and teaching oriented toward the betterment of the human community (with a focus on the organizational, individual, and community levels).[4]

There is recognition that there should be an increasing focus on social issues not only in social, scientific, and agricultural research but also in the service function of the university. This is apparent in reports that focus on the societal, institutional, and organizational levels. With his backdrop, the stage has been set for a research emphasis in the university in the near future that is increasingly socially oriented. Action-oriented research projects such as the single-men's research projects (and the hundreds of social action projects of the sixties) have been a part of this transformation. When the single-men's project in Sacramento was initiated in 1969, much of the self-examination that has taken place in the University system had not begun, although many of the questions were apparent. There are lessons to learn from these early attempts to respond to critical social problems.

When the university was contacted by the single-men's group in the spring of 1969, the campus was ill-prepared to work directly with a community group. The single-men's organization had to protest actively in order to secure university assistance. Once the university recognized the need to provide assistance to the group it was quickly realized that there was very little precedent for this kind of activity, and as a result there was a constant process of experimenting with alternative solutions; i.e., direct service and advocacy efforts, job training, in-culture and survey research, etc. And once successful methods of assisting the men were

developed, it was difficult to determine which organizational unit on campus was suited to support or administratively house these activities.

In the single-men's projects it was gradually discovered which community-based activities the university was best equipped to do. Through the in-culture research projects the university was able to assist the single-men's organizations in their self-help efforts. By developing questionnaires and conducting interviews themselves the single men were able to use the data. For the men the research and organizing efforts resulted in slight improvement in basic necessities like food, housing, and employment.

By trial and error much was learned about the single-men's subculture and their needs. These men had developed a lifestyle based on a casual-labor market. When this market declined it was not easy for the men to change the life pattern they had developed. The initial job-training project started by the university failed because it ignored the lifestyle the men had developed. They were easily trained in the mechanical skills they did not already have, since most of their lives had been spent in manual labor situations. However, training them to work full time for a living required more than learning new skills; it required an entirely new process of socialization.

The university and other organizations and institutions can work with these men to improve these conditions, however. Their communities have part-time employment opportunities that will meet the employment and survival needs of these men. Part-time employment by local homeowners, doing household repairs or yardwork, or by local businesses, doing work as needed, provides a partial answer. This set-up would meet the needs of both the homeowners and the single men, but at present there is no mechanism or agency in cities like Sacramento or Stockton to undertake this activity.

In the Sacramento and Stockton projects the emphasis was placed on finding ways to assist the single men in their self-help efforts. These efforts were partially successful and as a result the university learned some of the ways it can interact with community groups, it learned a great deal about the single-men's subculture, and it learned how to make social research directly useful to community groups. The university is not committed to placing a greater emphasis on social research. The challenge remains for the university to develop an organizational structure that can be responsive to community needs while contributing directly to the advancement of the social sciences and to the betterment of the human community.

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